

# The RIGHT TO WORK

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## THE RIGHT TO WORK







"I SEEK WORK—NOT CHARITY!"



# THE RIGHT TO WORK

BY

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*"Why stand you here all the day idle? They say  
to him: because no man hath hired us."*

—MATT. XX, 6-7.



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*Cum permissu superiorum.*

JOHN J. HUGHES, C.S.P.,

*Superior-General.*

*IMPRIMATUR.*

✠ NICHOLAS ALOYSIUS GALLAGHER,

*Bishop of Galveston.*

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In time of war prepare for peace! When the unprecedented demand for labor caused by war orders ceases, we shall undoubtedly experience the evils of unemployment as we have in the past. We should not live in a fool's paradise of unsound war prosperity, but should now be making provision to lessen the shock that will come when we are suddenly forced to adjust ourselves to peace conditions. Let us not forget the winter scenes of 1914-15 and of other years when we saw our army of unemployed mobilized.



# CONTENTS

## CHAPTER I

	PAGE
THE EXTENT AND EVILS OF UNEMPLOYMENT . . .	1
Lack of information as to extent of unemployment—There should be a government survey of unemployment at once—Private estimates place the number out of work in winter 1915-16 at 2,000,000—Unemployment is a normal phenomenon of industry—How unemployment affects those out of work, their dependents, charitably minded people, business men, and the whole country.	

## CHAPTER II

EVERY MAN HAS A RIGHT TO WORK . . . .	22
Remedy for unemployment is not charity—It is a recognition that each man has a right to work—Opinion of the moralists—The correlative duty to furnish the opportunity rests upon the State.	

## CHAPTER III

THE STATE'S DUTY TO THE TEMPORARILY UNEMPLOYED	43
The unemployed divide into those temporarily	

out of work and those unemployable—For the first there should be employment bureaus; co-ordination of seasonal occupations; and unemployment insurance.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE STATE'S DUTY TO THE UNEMPLOYABLE—THE CAPABLE . . . . . 63

There is no place in competitive industry for many capable men—Yet there is work to be done—The State (municipalities, States, and Federal authorities) should create opportunity to work—This might be cutting wood, breaking stone, draining swamps, building roads, etc.

## CHAPTER V

### THE STATE'S DUTY TO THE UNEMPLOYABLE—THE INCAPABLE . . . . . 82

Many can't be employed in private industry because of some defect, physical or moral—State should recognize them as a class apart—Prevent their production as far as possible—But there will always be some, and for them special institutions should be created—Already there are Good Shepherd Homes for women, and there should be similar ones for men.

# CONTENTS

vii

## CHAPTER VI

	PAGE
DUTY OF THE INDIVIDUAL . . . . .	102

While the duty corresponding to a man's right to work rests upon the State, each individual must do what he can to influence governmental action—We have developed our physical resources, now we should develop our human engines and dynamos.





WORK is the mission of man in this Earth. A day is ever struggling forward, a day will arrive in some approximate degree, when he who has no work to do, by whatever name he may be named, will not find it good to show himself in our quarter of the Solar System. . . .

Can the poor man that is willing to work, always find work, and live by his work? Statistic Inquiry . . . has no answer to give. Legislation presupposes the answer—to be in the affirmative. A large postulate; which should have been made a proposition of; which should have been demonstrated, made indubitable to all persons!

A man willing to work, and unable to find it, is perhaps the saddest sight that Fortune's inequality exhibits under this sun. Burns expresses feelingly what thoughts it gave him: a poor man seeking *work*; seeking leave to toil that he might be fed and sheltered! That he might but be put on a level with the four-footed workers of the Planet which is his!

There is not a horse willing to work but can get food and shelter in requital; a thing this two-footed worker has to seek for, to solicit occasionally in vain. He is nobody's two-footed worker; he is not even anybody's slave. And yet he is a *two*-footed worker; it is currently reported that there is an immortal soul in him, sent down out of Heaven into the Earth; and one beholds him *seeking* for this!—Nay, what will a wise Legislature say, if it turn out that he cannot find it; that the answer to their postulate proposition is not affirmative but negative?

CARLYLE, *Essays*, VI, 122, 124, 125.



## THE RIGHT TO WORK



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## CHAPTER I

### THE EXTENT AND EVILS OF UNEMPLOYMENT

OUR army has mobilized. But it is a very different army from that staining the fields of Europe with blood. It has no guns, its men are not clothed in neat khaki; no gorgeous banners wave proudly over its ranks; no bands stir the souls of its members to deeds of heroism for hearth and country. Our army, as a recent cartoon depicted it, is an army of unemployed derelicts that stands all the day idle, shivering in the cold winds as it forms a long line around some soup-kitchen or bread-house. It is a defeated

army, and it marches with the shambling, uncertain gait that comes from failure.

We do not know accurately how many men make up this army. There is no official roster kept of enlistment and discharge. No recruiting office with a high standard of physical fitness bars one's entrance and no court martial discharges for inefficiency or bad conduct. It is the easiest army in the world to get into, and the hardest to get out of. Desertion is difficult, often impossible, yet it marks the only path to honorable discharge from this most paradoxical of armies.

It has been our habit in this country to talk long and loudly about freedom, and to contrast our easy going methods with the galling espionage of the police systems of Europe. Fourth-of-July orators never tire of thanking heaven and George Washington that every American is free to work out his own salvation, vocal, journalistic, or eco-

conomic, without interference from the powers that be. But just what does this freedom amount to? Are all the people free every day as well as on the Fourth of July? And does that freedom really work out salvation for all, or does it work the salvation of the few and the destruction of the many?

In many cases our boasted freedom is a freedom to starve, a freedom to have one's community demoralized by shiftless wandering laborers, a freedom to work out one's own complete demoralization and that of others without let or hindrance from those whose duty it is to procure the common good. Unfortunately for those who have work, as well as for those who have it not, government does not interfere even to tell us the extent of this evil. Yet until we can know precisely how many are out of work, recommendations to improve conditions must be somewhat vague and general. Say, for instance, that

you wish to co-ordinate industries in such a way that those thrown out by one during a slack season will be taken on by another. Obviously, the first thing to do is to know how many are left idle in this way before you can say that certain other lines of work where busy seasons come at this time can take them on.

The first thing that should be done, therefore, is to have a thorough government survey of unemployment. Let us know accurately the extent of this phenomenon, let us have some official figures upon which students can rely. Such a survey should tell us not merely how many persons are out of work on a certain day, but it should exhibit fluctuations in employment in each industry throughout the year so that something could be done towards co-ordination. It would be well to know that two million men lost one hundred days each in a year, but it would be



better to know how many days were lost each month so as to see how far co-ordination would remedy the situation.

Until we do get such a government survey, however, we must be content with private estimates. These are really more or less shrewd guesses. During the winter of 1914-1915, the American Association for Labor Legislation attempted to determine the extent of unemployment, and its conclusion was that its "questionnaires have served to emphasize the most important present-day fact about unemployment; namely, that we know practically nothing about it and have no statistics available." (*American Labor Legislation Review*, November, 1915, p. 475.)

However, John B. Andrews, the secretary of this Association, thinks that the most conservative estimate would designate two million wage-earners as unemployed in the

United States during the winter of 1915-1916. ("American Cities and the Prevention of Unemployment," in *The American City*, February, 1916, p. 117.)

It must not be supposed that this problem is forced upon us by the European war and that it will disappear once peace is declared. This great cataclysm doubtless increased unemployment in this country by demoralizing our foreign trade, but the problem has been with us for years. The war has but forced our attention to a situation that should long since have been attended to, but which might have continued to escape our notice had it not become so acute. Now, perhaps, we have had the necessary stimulus to arouse us to action that will deal effectively with normal unemployment.

For unemployment is normal. Charles Booth noted long ago in his admirable survey of the poor of London that competitive

industry tends to produce a fringe of unemployed. Recently the Chicago Municipal Markets Commission reiterated this judgment. "Unemployment," it declared, "is an annual recurring, ever-present, normal condition of the maladjustment of industry and business. The absence of unemployment should rather be considered unusual and extraordinary and not its presence in our midst." (*Journal of Criminal Law and Criminology*, July, 1915, p. 299.)

Even comparatively steady employments have slack seasons. Thus it was found by students of the Catholic University at Washington, D. C., that there was a difference of fifty per cent. in the summer and winter payrolls of the Engineer Department of the District of Columbia. And the Factory Commission of New York State found variations of thirty to forty per cent. in the working forces of some industries comparatively free

from seasonal variations in trade volume. (*American Statistical Association*, Sept., 1915, p. 612.)

Further light is thrown upon the extent of unemployment by the experience of charity organizations. Examining figures furnished by the organized charities of New York, Boston, and Baltimore, Amos G. Warner found that one-third of the applicants required work, not relief. (*American Charities*, rev. ed., New York, 1908, p. 53.)

So far as my own experience goes, two-thirds would seem much nearer the mark, and I believe that if we could trace the life histories of the other third we would find that many of them would never have reached this condition of dependence had there been proper facilities for furnishing them with work when they first started upon the downward path.

But even though we discount these esti-

mates to a very considerable degree, and even though we confess to a lack of sufficiently definite information, yet we know that unemployment in all its phases is one of the most important problems of social adjustment. It is important enough in itself, God knows, to warrant all possible attention on the part of statesmen, but it is even more important on account of its cancerous ramifications throughout the whole social body.

For unemployment does not affect merely the million or so who are idle. It affects other millions, wives and children and dependents who are intimately connected with the unemployed, and just as really, though less obviously, it affects those who are not unemployed. Whatever may be the height and depth of our selfish disregard for others, there is no escaping the fact that when the devil takes the hindmost the jar of that tak-

ing is felt by every member of the body politic.

God laid upon disobedient man the obligation of earning his bread in the sweat of his brow. But his brother man, less merciful than God, has made heavier that burden by refusing him a living wage no matter how he sweats, and sometimes (as is happening to this army of unemployed) by the stronger refusing to the weaker the very right to sweat!

“Nowadays it is turned privilege  
To have only God’s curse on us and not man’s.”

And it is a weighty curse. For there is nothing harder in life, perhaps, than for a self-respecting man to tramp the streets in useless searching for work when none is to be found, to return at night to hungry wife and children with hands empty and no prospect of their being filled.

You who have scorned the laborer for his vices, who have smelt liquor upon a beggar or an applicant for work and therefore refused him, think for a moment of the temptation pulling at his heart—and at his stomach. If you were cold and hungry and wet, if all your efforts had only made the black despair of poverty grip you the harder, and the saloon were the only place that offered warmth and shelter and food and cheer and temporary oblivion—would you be strong enough to fight it? Possibly.

But there are hundreds of thousands who are not. They take the first drink, and the second, and the third. The habit grows upon them, and soon they are no longer self-respecting workmen out of work, but professional beggars and tramps. Their ambition is no longer to find work. It is to get the wherewithal to obtain liquor. They can no longer help themselves. And if they go a

little farther they can no longer be helped. A sodden, brutish content takes possession of their souls and they are ruined, almost beyond redemption.

Recently there appeared in one of our big dailies a cartoon poignantly depicting the beginning and the end of unemployment. Two ragged men sit on a bench in a public square. One slouches down upon the seat, his ears drawn into his collar, his hands in his pockets, a perfect portrayal of the man who has given up the fight. The other has not sunk so far. He is leaning forward, his face in his hands, his attitude not yet one of unresentful impotence. His companion says: "Cheer up, bo, think of the men in the trenches." And the reply eloquently voices the suffering of the self-respecting unemployed. "Huh!—They've got a chance to be shot!"

There is some hope for the man who would



rather die than endure this existence unworthy of a man. He still has some fight in him. If a life-line can be thrown him, he will be saved, but the man who has ceased to desire to work is hopeless. All internal resistance has been broken down. No vestige of self-respect or back-bone is left. If he is to be saved, it must be from outside and by being built up anew.

But there are still blacker shadows to this picture. If it were merely a question of two million men more or less responsible for their own fate, sinking into this demoralized condition, it would be serious enough. They might reasonably expect Christians with a command laid upon them to love their neighbors as themselves, to do something to help them. But unfortunately these men are not simply dropping back themselves. They are pulling others with them. Millions of dependent women and children are being

dragged into the slough of despond because the heads of families are no longer able to cope with the problem of support. Wives are forced out into casual employment, home duties neglected, children run wild or have their lives ground out in soul- and body-destroying toil.

We have heard much recently of the horrible evils of child and woman labor. Thousands of children are stunted in mind and body, because they must take their place in industry before their time. Children have actually been killed by excessive work in factories, and others who do not go to work have hardly a better fate. In every school in the poorer districts of our big cities, you can see the pinched and sallow faces, the spindle legs, bespeaking slow starvation. Women, too, at the most critical periods, when other lives are depending so directly upon theirs, are compelled to such heavy labor as saps

not only their own vitality but the strength of the coming generation. How can they possibly nourish two on what is not sufficient for one? How can the children born into such conditions be anything but weak and sickly and fretful?

Directly or indirectly unemployment is responsible for all these ills. For even when the head of the family has work, it is the fear of unemployment that makes him accept less than a living wage, and then drives his wife and children to eke out his pittance with their own. This is the sword of Damocles that is constantly over the helpless workman's head. He does not know at what moment it may fall to maim forever not only himself but also his loved ones.

But this does not exhaust the evils of unemployment. Like some great octopus it is reaching out its fearful tentacles to draw millions upon millions into its greedy maw.

It is not content with its immediate victims and their dependents, but it poisons the life of the whole community.

Obviously, the Good Samaritan is affected. For whence come the food and clothing and shelter that the idle need? These men must be supported in some way. If there were two million men idle last winter, then for every day of idleness at least two million dollars in wages were lost. And while, naturally, this huge army does not spend as much in times of idleness as it did when employed, nevertheless, it must need tremendous sums for its support. Some of this money comes from past savings, but much must also come from those who are still employed. The longer idleness continues, the more of a burden does this army of unemployed become.

Yet another loss to the community is derived from the fact that if these men had

continued working they would have added to the wealth of the nation about two and one-half times their wages. That is to say, if their wages would have been a billion dollars, the total product of their labor would have been worth, before deducting their pay, three and one-half billions. Such a loss of national wealth would be serious under any conditions, but it is doubly serious when we are paying a fuel bill, as it were, to burn it up. If a fire or earthquake or flood were to destroy this much wealth every paper in the country would deplore it. Why, then, do we calmly ignore this much worse condition, which yearly engulfs not alone material wealth but the very life's blood of the nation in ruined manhood and womanhood and childhood!

Again, the business men who have to bear the burden of charity to support these unemployed must do so from decreased resources,

because of the lessened purchasing power of the public. No man can prosper in business unless his neighbor prospers too. The merchant is engaged in selling, and the greater his neighbor's power to pay, the more he can sell. The corner groceryman realizes this well. He knows that if his patrons are out of work, his bills will be unpaid; and others are affected similarly, though not so visibly. Inability to sell reacts, too, upon the wages of employees as well as upon the profits of employers, so that the effects of unemployment reach all classes—the workmen employed, the merchant, the Good Samaritan, the priest and the Levite.

Still further, the fact that two million persons are consuming without producing means that the cost of living will rise. For prices will be higher than they would be were the supply increased by the possible product of all these idle workers.

There is, then, no way in which any one can pass by on the other side of these unfortunates. Whether or not their hearts are touched with Christian charity, the blight of their brother's misfortune will shadow their fortune. Only the very few, such as loan sharks, who make a business of preying upon the poor, can profit by large masses being out of work. All legitimate business suffers directly or indirectly.

It has frequently been said that each workman in Europe is carrying a soldier on his back. But it is a vigorous soldier who can be of some use to his country. With us the workers are carrying an army on their backs, but it is a helpless, a useless, a vicious consuming and non-producing army that can do the country no good under any conditions. It is almost as if each laborer were carrying a foreign, invading soldier on his back.

We have often heard it said during the

present war that Europe has reverted to barbarism. Our people are aghast at the destruction of life and property going on abroad. They thank God that they are not as other men, that they have more Christian charity, more love of their brothers than to indulge in such senseless slaughter. Yet it might be better for us to stand afar off in the temple and strike our breasts while asking God to be merciful to us sinners. For the comparison is not entirely to our credit.

The soldier dies with an ideal in his heart, with love for his country and his hearth, with his manhood intact. Our poor ragged soldier does not, perhaps, lose his life—he loses only his self-respect, his manhood, his faith in his fellow man, his faith in God! In this army of ours there is none of the morale that comes from discipline, none of the spiritual exaltation that is induced by consecration to a cause, none of the confidence and



efficiency inspired by trusted leaders. Our soldier has strength but is forbidden to use it, has protectiveness that is turned to bitter raging impotence, he has skill which is lost in the gradual relaxing of physical and moral fibre. His vision becomes shifty, his muscles relaxed, his will feeble, and if he does not escape in time it will take a miracle to save him. Almost literally he will have to be born again if he is to be redeemed.

## CHAPTER II

### EVERY MAN HAS A RIGHT TO WORK

WE have seen something of the extent and evils of unemployment. Those directly injured—the actual workers and their dependents—mount up into the millions, while the whole country is indirectly affected. And this condition is at the bottom of much drink and sickness and almost all poverty. When we take a broad survey in this way of all its ramifications, it is almost impossible to exaggerate the importance of this problem.

Unquestionably the fact of so many men being out of work demands action, and prompt action. But at the same time it de-

mands that the action shall be wise and prudent. To go off half cocked, as it were, to be led by a kindly heart rather than a mature judgment may merely add to our difficulties, and our last state may be worse than our first. For though conditions are bad enough, they are better than they might be.

It may be well, therefore, at the very start to point out certain things that should not be done. For, while it is good to be sorry for having made a mistake, it is better to exercise such foresight as will prevent mistakes being made.

To begin with, then, the remedy for unemployment is not the free distribution of food and clothing. Soup-kitchens, bread-lines, indiscriminate charity are palliatives that may make the disease worse than it is at present. It may be necessary sometimes to give immediate assistance. A man who has been out of work so long that he is half starved or

who is too weak to work may need food above everything else.

But such measures should be recognized frankly as merely temporary. They do not affect the real problem in the least. The immediate need of the applicant is relieved, but he will be back again to-morrow. And perhaps to-morrow he will not be alone. Indiscriminate charity in the sphere of philanthropy is like fertilizer on a wheat field—it produces a more abundant crop. Where one beggar grew before, there will be two under such a system, or lack of system. What we need is something to stop the supply. It may be necessary to pour oil and wine into a man's wounds, but we should also do something to prevent men getting into a condition where they need such charity.

Many people strive to salve their consciences by spreading a king's feast for the poor at Christmas or Thanksgiving, and re-

fuse to consider their necessities the other three hundred and sixty-four days of the year. They send to the Salvation Army or other charitable organizations their discarded clothing in all stages of careless disrepair. But even if it were possible for good-hearted people to assume the entire support of the unemployed in a decent and respectable manner, it would be far from desirable. The person who for the first time has accepted charity has abated something of his self-respect. A second application is easier, and then the down grade leading to dependence is short and easily travelled.

Men soon lose the desire to work hard for a living when charitably minded folk are willing to relieve them of the necessity. Our pity should never make us forget that the command to earn one's bread in the sweat of one's brow is beneficent and necessary. It is false kindness to dispense with that law,

and the consequences are even more disastrous with poor people than with rich. Both classes—the upper and the lower tenth—prove that there is something sacramental about work, that idleness leads to physical and moral disintegration, and that every one needs the uplifting influence of useful activity.

“Get leave to work

In this world—’tis the best you get at all;  
For God, in cursing, gives us better gifts  
Than men in benediction. God says ‘Sweat  
For foreheads:’ men say, ‘Crowns.’ And so we  
are crowned,  
Ay, gashed by some tormenting circle of steel  
Which snaps with a sudden spring. Get work,  
get work!

Be sure ’tis better than what you work to get.”

(*Mrs. Browning*, “*Aurora Leigh*,” Book II.)

Our first conviction, therefore, in approaching this question should concern the essential blessedness of work and its healing power for social evils. Hence any one who

is able to work, whether rich or poor, should work. For there is imposed on every one the duty to labor (Cathrein, *Moralphilosophie*, II, 59). "As a bird to fly, so is man made to work. Wisely, too, has the Creator placed in man's nature many needs that are not immediately satisfied, so that he may not lack the motive for a many-sided activity and development of his powers. For most men labor is necessary in order that they may honorably provide for and support themselves and those dependent upon them. Labor is also necessary that men may avoid certain moral dangers and temptations; according to the old adage, idleness is the beginning of every vice. Finally, labor is useful, not merely for the preservation of health, but also for the acquirement of moral virtues and merit for eternity." (*Id.*)

Those who are able to work, but won't, should be made to work; those who are anx-

ious to work, but who cannot find access to the land or tools, should be provided with the opportunity. Society is wrongly organized unless work is guaranteed. It is a cruel mockery to tell a man, "If you work, you must get a sufficient wage to support yourself and family in frugal comfort"—and then let him starve for want of work. We need more than a minimum wage law; we need also to provide the opportunity of working for such a wage. A man, by the very fact that he is a man, has a right to a living wage, but he also has a right to work.

This, then, is our second conviction in approaching this problem of unemployment—that *each man has a right to work.*

We are so accustomed to an exaggerated individualism that this proposition seems startling at first sight. The discredited theories of a *laissez faire* age may yet obscure



our vision somewhat. However, it is neither right nor natural that men should be allowed to starve because they cannot find work, nor that they should be fed on doles of charity without working. It is an accident of the capitalistic régime. But it has not accompanied other régimes, nor is it an essential phenomenon of our present industrial system.

If we go back through past periods of economic history, we can see that this great problem of unemployment was practically unknown. When the earth was being peopled and her children looked out upon virgin resources, all a man had to do was to use the opportunities common to all. He could hunt or fish or hew wood to his heart's content or as his skill allowed. There was no one whose permission he needed to ask if he wished trout for dinner or fire to warm his hut. The skins of beasts he killed furnished him with

clothing as comfortable and satisfactory as that made by a Fifth Avenue tailor.

Evidently, there was no question of unemployment here. Of work there was always a superabundance. If a man starved, it was not for lack of work. Employment was the natural and customary thing, unemployment was unnatural and unusual.

Again, under a régime of serfdom or slavery, there was ordinarily no problem of employment. We have had slave uprisings because too much work was placed upon them, because they were required to make bricks without straw, but whoever heard of slaves rebelling because there was no work, because there were no bricks to be made?

A slave's work was never done. The amount of labor applicable to a plantation was practically unlimited. It was the easiest thing in the world to find work, and if one didn't find it for himself, some one else

found it for him. An overseer with a black-snake whip, even if he never used it, was always a possibility to stimulate exertion.

We should be extremely careful not to allow the familiarity of certain phenomena attaching to the régime under which we live to make us think them necessary and inevitable. Indeed, the fact that such unjust and inhuman conditions as we have described in the first chapter exist now without being questioned indicates (paradoxical as it may seem) that they did not always exist. For if they had existed when the great Christian moralists were writing, assuredly they would have come in for their share of comment and condemnation.

But as these men wrote under a régime that was partly one of serfdom and partly one of small self-employers, they did not give to this question of the right to work the consideration that is forced upon our at-

tention, because for them the problem did not exist. Thus St. Thomas in his epoch-making *Secunda Secundae* makes no mention of the question. In the society upon which he looked out the opportunity to work was almost always present, and there was no use wasting time talking about such an improbable hypothesis as that a man should not have the chance to work.

To-day, however, the moralist faces an entirely different situation. A few individuals have appropriated the natural resources, and as a man needs natural resources before he can work, he is barred from working unless the owners allow it. If he needs a dinner and is willing to work for it by killing a rabbit, as he might have done at one time in the world's history, there may be a game-keeper to arrest him for poaching. Or if he wishes to make something (as he might have done under a régime of hand work), he dis-

covers that the raw materials have all been appropriated or that he cannot work without the use of tools belonging to some one else.

At present the majority of men can work only by permission of other men. In some ways the modern laborer is worse off than slave or serf, for they were assured at least of food and clothing and shelter. Over him, on the contrary, there hangs a nerve-racking uncertainty. His living depends upon his selling the only commodity he has, his labor, and in that position he is worse off than the seller of any other article. For a man who offers oranges, for instance, can hold them until to-morrow if the price is not satisfactory, whereas the laborer cannot sell to-day's labor to-morrow. It will have disappeared completely, and to-morrow's supply will be inferior if to-day he did not get sufficient food to meet his physical needs.

What, then, is the answer that moralists give when confronted with this situation? Has a man a right to demand a market for his labor? *Has he a right to work?*

It will be only among the very modern writers that we shall find any discussion of this subject. St. Thomas and his contemporaries, as we have seen, did not advert to it because it was merely hypothetical in their time. For St. Alphonsus, even, it was hardly a practical question, and we need not be surprised to find him discussing "Labor" only in relation to Sunday observance and fasting. Leo XIII, it is true, was *ex professo* and at length treating of the condition of workingmen, but he was living in a country where the effects of the industrial revolution had not proceeded as far as in England and the United States and where the less acute phenomena of unemployment were further tempered by extensive emigration. His fail-

ure to mention this phase of the situation was not, therefore, extraordinary. But it seems rather curious that Lehmkuhl with his interest in modern social problems should have insisted strongly in his *Theologia Moralis* upon the duty to work while completely passing over the right to work. (The edition of 1902 is the one before me. Perhaps in later editions or elsewhere he has treated this point.)

Noldin has this short, though very clear, reference: "Every man has a *right to work*, that is, he has a right by just means to seek labor which is lawful for him and to perform that labor, and hence he has a right to demand that others shall not hinder him in the exercise of this right. This right is founded in another right, that of preserving and perfecting life, to which industrial labor is ordinarily necessary." (*Theologia Moralis*, II, No. 69.)

This principle is perfectly plain. And though Noldin goes on to qualify his statement, the qualification really means nothing more than that the laborer has not a strict right in commutative justice. Noldin's words are: "No one has a right *to work*, that is, to demand that some one else (whether a private individual or the State) should offer or procure him work, even though he be in need of the necessities of life."

The reason that Noldin gives for this qualification—that "in every case the obligation of supplying lucrative employment is opposed to the right of property"—shows clearly that he means it in the sense in which we have explained it. For in the same way the right of property is opposed to the obligation of actually giving one's possessions to another. Yet all theologians agree that a person in extremest need has a right to take



what he needs, and that the possessor has *a duty in charity to give.*

To prevent the disorders that would result from asserting these rights, however, there is a duty of legal justice incumbent upon the State to furnish work to such as cannot otherwise find it. When a government allows such a private appropriation of property as to close all opportunity of employment to any large class, it becomes responsible for affording to each man some reasonable return for the opportunities that would otherwise be his. Private property should never be absolute. The State will not allow a private individual who owns both sides of a navigable river to close it to traffic or to fishing, and as it sometimes compels individual owners of large tracts of land to open roads for the convenience of the public, so it should keep open certain avenues to work that would otherwise be closed by the selfish-

ness of individuals. This is a simple demand of justice.

Each one, then, has a right in legal justice to the opportunity to work. Noldin, indeed, specifically admits this when the number of unemployed is so great as to endanger the good of the community. (*Loc. cit.*) For all practical purposes this is to acknowledge the right to work, since we have seen that there can be no question but what this condition is fulfilled. The man out of work is interested in getting a job, and it is all one to him whether the State is obliged in legal or in commutative justice to supply it.

Cathrein, perhaps, brings this out more clearly than Noldin. After speaking of the laborer's insecurity of existence under the present industrial order, he adds: "In order to give the workman a sure basis for his existence, there is ascribed to him *a right to work*. However, this is not a universal,

strict right. No irrefutable reason for such a [strict] right can be given. . . . But at times society (the municipality or the State) has the duty, according to its ability, to furnish laborers with remunerative employment. For in the extremest need each one has a right to take for himself, wherever he finds it, what is necessary for life. This right belongs also to the laborer. And who will forbid him to unite with others, who are in the same condition, in the attainment of this object? From such a condition of affairs there may easily arise the most serious evils for the community. Hence the authorities are bound to prevent this in some way. The proper way is not the distribution of alms, but the furnishing of lucrative work. This is often to be had, though the laborers do not know of it. Public employment bureaus are therefore to be commended. . . . But if work is to be found in

no other way, then the municipalities or the State should undertake public improvements (street paving, canals, and the like).” (*Moralphilosophie*, II, p. 632.)

While there is no doubt that unemployment is so widespread as to cause serious danger to the community, yet as a matter of precision it is well to insist that the right to support himself is inherent in each man, and that even if there were only one citizen who could not find this opportunity, the State would be obliged in legal justice to furnish him the chance.

This is a perfectly legitimate conclusion from the words of Leo XIII, and that learned Pontiff would probably have drawn it himself had his attention been called to it. “The preservation of life,” he writes in his Encyclical on *The Condition of Labor*, “is the bounden duty of each and all, and to fail therein is a crime. It follows that each

one has a right to procure what is required in order to live; and the poor can procure it in no other way than by work and wages." The great social reform Pope concluded with inexorable logic that this right to live implied a right to a living wage: does it not at the same time imply *a right to work for this wage*? If a man can live only by work, and he has a right to live, there seems no escape from the conclusion that he has a right to work. For the right to a living wage without the right to work is as profitable to an unemployed laborer as is the water of a mirage to a thirsty traveller.

We have seen how far Noldin and Lehmkuhl and Cathrein accept this doctrine. They are not alone, however. Fr. Kelleher, in his excellent book on *Private Ownership*, sees the implications of such a system and asserts that each one has a right to a job or to its equivalent. And Cardinal Manning,

though not a theologian nor a scientific social worker, had considerable insight into social conditions, and declared emphatically: "Every man has a right to work or to bread." (Purcell's *Life of Cardinal Manning*, II, p. 656.

So far as I know, prominent non-Catholic ethicists (if we exclude Socialists) have not touched upon this specific point of the right to work.

## CHAPTER III

### THE STATE'S DUTY TO THE TEMPORARILY UN-EMPLOYED

WHEN unemployment is as extended as it is in the United States, moralists are agreed that the State has a duty in legal justice to provide in some way for those out of work. But before determining what is to be done, we must realize that all are not unemployed for the same reason; and hence that the same treatment will not apply to all alike. A remedy that is to be meted out to all in the same way is by that very fact condemned. A careful diagnosis must be made before any prudent steps can be taken to mend matters.

In examining the situation, the first out-

standing fact that strikes the observer is that some of the unemployed are unemployable—at least by private employers. This may be because of some defect. (Cf. “The Men We Lodge: a Report of the Advisory Social Service Committee of the Municipal Lodging House of New York City,” *American Labor Legislation Review*, Nov., 1915, p. 607.) Even those who are able-bodied, but who will not work, belong in this class, as they need more discipline than the private employer can afford to give.

Or it may be that a man is unemployable in any private undertaking because there may be no place for him. When industry is organized for sale, no employer wants more hands than he needs to make the goods he can sell. If he takes on more, it is at a loss, and he will be forced to give way to less kind-hearted employers.

These two divisions of the unemployables



—the capable and the incapable—require the making of work for them by the State, though in different ways. The measure is so distinct from the remedy that is necessary for what may be called the temporarily unemployed that its consideration can best be deferred to another chapter.

The other class—those who can profitably be used in competitive industry—may be conveniently subdivided into three groups.

First of all, we have those belonging to trades where work is steady, but a few days are lost between each job. If the wages are good, the loss of time can be looked upon as an enforced vacation. What they need most is information as to another job, and hence employment bureaus are the proper solution.

Again, there are persons out of work because they are engaged in some seasonal occupation, such as logging, chopping cotton, and the like. More than anything else they

need a co-ordination of industries so that they can move from one to another without much loss of time.

And finally we have those who are only occasionally out of work, as book-keepers, typists, and printers. In addition to employment agencies, they need assistance till they can find work, and the best way to give it to them is by compulsory insurance.

We must not think because we make this division of the unemployed that the remedies do not overlap. As a matter of fact, insurance and employment agencies will help all three classes, and the man engaged in some seasonal occupation will be helped by all three remedies.

## I. EMPLOYMENT BUREAUS

The object of an employment bureau is to notify the jobless man of an opportunity to

work. Charitable agencies have long been doing this task in a haphazard, systemless sort of way, but the employment bureau was first efficiently developed, as a profitable enterprise, in certain limited spheres, such as domestic service and teaching. Even to-day some of these private undertakings are satisfactorily serving both employers and employed. This is especially true where labor requiring a certain technical preparation is handled.

As a whole, however, private employment agencies have fallen into disrepute on account of certain alleged abuses in connection with them. They are said, for instance, sometimes to have had agreements with an employer to discharge men already employed in order that they might get another fee from some other applicant. In large centers like New York and Chicago, and in jobs requiring no skill, such an operation

seems entirely possible. At any rate, some States have forbidden private agencies to operate, except in so far as they deal with a trained clientele to some extent able to defend itself.

These possible abuses, and the nature of the work requiring a large office force, elaborate record keeping, and wide experience regarding labor conditions, have led to the establishment of public bureaus by municipalities, States and the Federal Government.

To do the work effectively bureaus conducted by each one of these governmental agencies are necessary, or at least by the municipalities and the Federal authorities. A certain minute knowledge of conditions is necessary to advise applicants quickly and successfully, and at the same time a broad survey of the field in order to direct the larger migrations of labor. The chief object of the local bureaus will be to assist those

who are tied to that particular place in some way, whereas the national agency by adding to the mobility of labor will help to stabilize employment.

In the beginning of such a movement a large amount of advertising will be necessary to bring the bureaus before the employers and the unemployed. Both classes must be educated to use these channels to supply their respective wants. Until that is done, special field agents will probably be necessary to get in touch with employers. For the side on which most bureaus fail to-day is in finding jobs, not workers. Unfortunately, the various governmental agencies that have established bureaus so far have been so parsimonious in their appropriations that their efficiency has been seriously handicapped. An experiment with such a bureau is worthless unless it is done on a large enough scale to get definite results.

Again, employment bureaus should have ample funds for record keeping. To give satisfaction to employers it is essential that the bureau should know whom it is recommending for a particular position, and it can do so only by a somewhat elaborate record. And not only should the man's qualifications be put down, and the jobs that are vacant, but some follow-up system should be used to find out when a client secures employment and whether he keeps it permanently, and when jobs are filled, so as not to send a man on a wild-goose chase.

If we had had but one-fourth as many bureaus as we have, and they had been conducted properly, we should now have some valuable information as to the extent of unemployment and unemployableness, and their causes. But as it is, their statistics are almost worthless.

Two limitations in regard to employ-

ment bureaus should be borne in mind. First, they do not create opportunities for work. If the season is dull, a crisis is on, or indeed even in normal times, they may be obliged to tell applicants that there are no jobs. Again, they do not help the laborer immediately and directly. Should he be absolutely destitute, it will go hard with him till he gets a job (if he should be so fortunate) and until he gets his pay at the end of a week's work, perhaps. Employment agencies, therefore, no matter how perfect, cannot solve the whole problem. They must be supplemented by specially created opportunities for work, and by unemployment insurance that will tide over the temporarily idle workman.

## II. CO-ORDINATION

Employment agencies have failed very largely in this country because the outlook

of their directors was too narrow or they were hampered in the amount of money placed at their disposal. No bureau can be really efficient under present conditions unless it makes some effort to remove certain underlying causes of unemployment. For unless this is done the agency will be swamped with applicants, especially at certain seasons.

One of the measures necessary to relieve unemployment is vocational education and vocational guidance. The bureaus, of course, cannot undertake this education. Other departments of the State can best do that. But industrial education is useless unless there is a wise ratio maintained between the supply and the demand in a particular sphere. For commercial schools to turn out hundreds of stenographers and typists when only scores are needed in the business world is a blunder that is not compensated for by



the efficiency of their training. They will suffer as much as the inefficient.

A certain vocational guidance is, therefore, necessary if industrial education is to be successful. And the employment bureau is the logical source of such guidance. With proper records, a close touch kept with the business community, and a wide outlook upon conditions, the bureau should be able to advise wisely the individual and the department of education. Harmonious relations should be established between the employment agency and the school board, and individual pupils should be encouraged to go to the bureau for consultation as to their life-work. Such a correlation of government departments would add immensely to the efficiency of all.

But it is in the field of co-ordinating seasonal occupations that the employment agencies could do most to increase their ef-

iciency. Unfortunately, there are many industries that can work only a part of the year. Agriculture, the most important of all industries, is at the same time the obvious example of part-time employment. The winter is comparatively dull, then comes spring with its ploughing and planting, summer with its cultivation, and fall with its harvesting. Many more hands are needed in spring and fall than in winter or summer. What are they to do in between? The building and garment trades, canning, logging are all similarly affected.

Where the demands of a particular industry, such as loading and unloading vessels, varies from day to day, the number of men required will vary. But the number of men led to depend upon that industry is sometimes increased by the method of hiring beyond the total number ever employed on the busiest day. If ten thousand men, say, are

employed regularly, and then at busy times others taken on according to need, the total number depending upon the industry would be the greatest number ever used. But if there is no nucleus regularly employed, each man needed being hired by the day, a constant variation in the force is introduced. The ten thousand who are needed even on dull days will not always be the same ten thousand. The 260,000 working days a month for such a force will be distributed, perhaps, among thirteen thousand men, giving each five days a week rather than affording ten thousand full time. In this way a larger number of men will be supported on part-time wages than is really needed to do the work.

There are two objects, therefore, at which we should aim: (1) such a reorganization of industry as will avoid as far as possible seasonal fluctuations; and (2) such a co-ordina-

tion of industries as will insure that the slack season of one will correspond with the brisk season of another.

Part of the seasonal fluctuations can be handled only by a thorough education of the consumers. An almost unanimous demand for straw hats or winter clothes at a particular date may cause complications in the trade that produce a severe hardship for the workers. There is apt to be excessive overtime at one season and part-time or unemployment at another. As a nation we want things done too quickly. The demand for rapid prosecution of some public building, for instance, may mean the importation of thousands of laborers who will be stranded when the job is finished. From the standpoint of national efficiency, it would be better to use the local labor supply up to its limit for a longer time.

Employment bureaus, it is true, cannot do much directly to produce such results. They

can, however, furnish information that will prove effective ammunition for others and ultimately lead to legislation. For stringent laws against overtime would force employers to a wiser planning of production.

But in the matter of co-ordinating industries, the employment bureaus should be able to do much. With their knowledge of labor conditions they can most wisely advise the seasonally employed where they can get work. More than this, however, being in contact with employers they can frequently suggest ways and means of limiting seasonal fluctuations. It is probable that if a thorough study of agricultural conditions were made from this standpoint, a combination of crops could be worked out for each section that would materially lessen the present variation in demand for labor. Sometimes, too, by the combination of industries, a large force can be profitably employed almost the

whole year. A familiar example of this is the coal and ice trade, so often found in humorous proximity; but there are many other applications, and employment bureaus properly conducted ought to be able to point them out. Thus in some of the country districts of Germany bricklayers do butchering during the winter when they cannot work at their principal trade.

### III. UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

With the most perfect co-ordination possible, however, there will still be large numbers who will find themselves out of work. And with the most efficient management possible of employment bureaus, it will often be several days before they can secure other positions. In the meantime, and before they get paid in their new jobs, what are they to do? If they have saved enough to tide them

over, well and good. But if they did not have sufficient foresight, or strength of will, or a high enough salary to save, what then?

Heretofore, such persons have been left dependent upon voluntary charity. But despite previous failures, some far-seeing students believe that the real solution to the problem must come from social insurance. (Cf. Rubinow, *Social Insurance*, N. Y., 1913.) Great Britain was the first nation to make trial on any comprehensive scale of compulsory social insurance for unemployment, but the war intervened before the plan had been in operation long enough to prove or disprove its practicability.

The British system required a contribution from the employer, the employee and the State. In the case of low risk industries or individuals, a rebate was allowed where continuous employment could be proved. A total of fifteen weeks was the limit for which

assistance could be demanded in any one year.

There are certain serious difficulties in the way of successful unemployment insurance, but they are not insuperable. At present, with our defective statistics, the calculation of the risk is impossible; but a system of relative grants could be devised against exceptional conditions and as our statistics became fuller we could perfect the regulations.

The chief difficulty is that the nature of the risk evades definition. In the case of employers' liability, old age, sickness or accident insurance, there are objective facts that can be determined with sufficient certainty. Malingering may be possible, but it can be guarded against to a large extent. But when it is a question of a man being out of work, is the voluntarily unemployed to be subsidized as well as others? If not, how is he to be distinguished?



Again, if professional loafers are excluded, what is to be done about the man who voluntarily quits work on a strike? The employers do not wish to contribute to a fund that can be used against them if strikers are to be paid from it, and workmen do not wish to contribute if they are not to be paid.

Or if a man quits work for some personal reason affecting him individually, is he to be paid? If it is on account of long hours, unsanitary conditions, and so on, it will affect others, too; but should others be obliged to contribute to a fund that will humor his whim or personal dislike for his employer?

The answer seems to be that social insurance is not a panacea. No one piece of legislation, whether it be unemployment insurance or anything else, can operate successfully by itself. There must be many mutually helpful institutions to make any one attain efficiency.

Hence in the case of unemployment insurance, some system of arbitration would be needed if strikers are to enjoy the benefits. And to distinguish between the voluntarily and the involuntarily unemployed, the bureau would need some sort of work test. If an applicant for insurance refused to work for a private employer when the opportunity was offered him, he should forfeit his right to insurance. Further, if he does not obtain such employment within a reasonable time, he should be sent to some government institution where he can get work. For the professional loafers there should be other institutions furnishing the necessary discipline.

We are led, therefore, to the establishment of governmental agencies to make work for the willing and to force work from the unwilling. These will be considered in the following chapters.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE STATE'S DUTY TO THE UNEMPLOYABLE— THE CAPABLE

WE have proceeded thus far in our argument: The laborer has a right to work. But the duty corresponding to the laborer's right to work cannot rest upon the individual employer as such. It is useless to urge upon employers, who have to cut expenses as far as possible, to take on more men. They simply cannot do it, and as a consequence we cannot look to them for any help in diminishing the number of unemployed. Merely individual efforts cannot make this parable of the laborers in the vineyard an anachronism. Unless the State steps in to handle the situation, there will

continue to be hundreds of thousands of men of whom it may be asked, "Why stand you here all the day idle?" and always the answer will be, "Because no man hath hired us."

Insurance against unemployment is one way in which the State may deal with the problem of unemployment. But it has many serious defects. One drawback is that the amount given per week (about \$1.75 in England) must inevitably be too small to buy even the barest necessities of life. And the doling out of such pittance, even though they did come partly from the enforced savings of the laborers themselves, would be accompanied by many of the demoralizing effects of charity. Those whose standard was low would be inclined to rest content with the pension and would not seek earnestly enough for work.

More fundamental, however, is the objec-

tion that this is an unproductive spending of past accumulation, and so cannot be a real solution of the problem. It does not touch the heart of the question. The machinery is simply changed a little from that now in use. The fact remains that these unemployed would still be a burden upon the employed. Only the finding of productive employment can be considered a satisfactory meeting of the situation. Anything short of this is merely patchwork.

The finding of such work can be done partly by well-organized employment bureaus. To bring the laborer and the job together, Federal, State and municipal employment bureaus can do something, but not everything. Such institutions are powerless to create work, and this is necessary. They have their sphere of usefulness, but something more radical is needed. Even with the most perfect employment bureaus in the

world, the only information possible to give many seekers would be that there was no work for them. There would still be hundreds of thousands of men standing all the day idle because no man had hired them.

We do not know what percentage of the whole that would be, but there are many indications that it would be very large. Even in Germany, the land of efficiency, employment bureaus (according to Peter Bonn, *Das Arbeitshaus ohne Zwang*, pp. 318ff.: Hamm, Westf., 1911) can find work for only about fifty per cent. of the applicants. And this number should probably be materially reduced by subtracting those who find only temporary employment and who are soon discharged for incompetence.

In the first two weeks of its existence, the New York public employment bureau received 6,232 applications for employment and only 360 calls from employers. (*Am.*

*Labor Leg. Rev.*, Nov., 1915, p. 543.) The postal experiment of the Federal authorities in New York State, between April 22, 1915, and October 1, 1915, placed only 13,391 out of 49,544 applicants. Throughout the whole country under the same experiment, there were 125,643 applicants and 29,136 positions filled. (U. S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, *Monthly Bulletin*, Nov., 1916, p. 20.)

Such figures should be discounted, too, if they are no more reliable than those of many other employment agencies. Thus a committee of the Massachusetts Legislature found that out of 500 men reported placed by a Boston bureau only 180 had actually received jobs, and only 25 obtained work for more than three months. (Margaret Nash, "Municipal Employment Bureaus," in *National Municipal Review*, July, 1915, p. 433, quoting pp. 74-76 of the Committee's Report.)

Competitive, privately conducted industry, therefore, will not employ all our workmen. But this much is certain, that if a nation cannot set its idle hands to work it is not efficiently organized. It used to be thought that there was only a certain amount of work to be done, and that therefore it was a good thing from the laborer's standpoint to loaf on a job in order to make it last longer. But there is really much more work than will ever be accomplished.

If we take first the simple case of a family, we shall understand the situation better. A housewife's work is never done. There is always something else to do, and she can always advantageously put idle hands to work rather than give them food while they do nothing. Government is only large house-keeping. The size of the operations complicates matters but does not essentially alter them. It is always better for society to put



men to work than to feed them in idleness.

Or, again, take the case of a religious community. Whoever heard of there not being enough work to go round? Why, even the largest of them, running up into the scores of thousands, are continually crying for more recruits. Their trouble is too much work, not too little. The fields are white unto harvest, but the laborers are few. We do not need to pray for harvest and for work, but for some system whereby we can utilize all the laborers we have.

A fact that seems to be overlooked in much talk upon this subject is that these idle men are actually being supported now. It is true, they are not getting enough to maintain a decent standard for a self-respecting workman, but they are getting enough food and clothing and shelter to keep body and soul together. Whence does it come? Not from their own efforts, for they are doing nothing,

and in the majority of cases their savings are exhausted. It must come, therefore, from the product of those who are still working. Now if this were taken in the way of taxes and used to give these men employment, they would make some return to the State, be kept self-respecting, and could reach a higher standard.

It may be said that the taxes would fall mainly upon the poor people, whereas the charitable funds from which they are at present helped come chiefly from the wealthy. But as a matter of fact it is principally the poor who help the poor. The struggling corner-groceryman, the fellow laborer, the friend only less poor than the idle, are now the chief contributors, and they are at present giving more than they would give in taxes under the system advocated.

That this giving of work by the State is the real solution of the problem is being

more and more clearly recognized by advanced social workers. Thus the Chicago Municipal Markets Commission recommended that public works and improvements should be opened up during the slack seasons of private enterprise, and that work should be created for the unemployed by public and private industry. (*Journal of Criminal Law and Criminology*, July, 1915, p. 299.)

Idaho has shown its recognition of the right to work by providing sixty days' public work for all citizens who cannot find other employment. (*Am. Lab. Leg. Rev.*, Dec., 1915, p. 763.) This is pitifully inadequate, but it is encouraging as indicating the trend of thought. It exhibits a growing sense of the meaning and importance of this problem of unemployment. The constitutionality of the law is being tested, but while the movement can be retarded by an adverse decision

it cannot be killed. One generation of judges declared unconstitutional all regulation of the labor of women and children, only to have another generation reverse its ruling.

When the constructive statesman undertakes to furnish this work, however, he finds that he is dealing with two essentially distinct classes of men.

One class is self-respecting, honest and industrious. The men who form it could be profitably employed in private industry if there were only a place for them. That is to say, they are individually about as efficient as the men who are actually employed. If the skill of the *entrepreneur* class increased they would be taken on.

The other class is more or less completely down and out. Its members have some defect that renders them useless to the private employer. They drink, perhaps, or are so lazy that it would take more in foremen's

wages to make them work than they are worth, or they are dishonest, or quarrelsome. Sometimes they have the *wanderlust*, because they have acquired the habit from being forced from one place to another in search of work. Whether their defects are curable or not, they cannot be used in competitive industry. They are discards thrown on the scrap heap to rust out instead of wearing out.

Evidently the method of dealing with each class must be different. It is so radically different that the discussion of the second class will be postponed to another chapter. Now we take up the question as to what should be done by the governmental agencies to create work for the self-respecting, capable unemployed.

The first problem that presents itself in this connection is: what kind of work should be given? Should a watch-maker be set to

making watches, should a clerk keep books, and so on? Or are all to be given the same kind of work? Does a man's right to work imply a right to the kind of work in which he has specialized?

It would be useless for any government to attempt giving each man his own special kind of work unless it were frankly and whole-heartedly to adopt Socialism. Perhaps even then it could not be done. But the right to work does not imply a right to such special work. For it is based upon the right to earn one's living, and if this opportunity is given in one way rather than another, the State has nevertheless fulfilled its duty in legal justice.

In fact, for any one who realizes the inestimable value of personal ambition as fostered by a competitive organization of industry, it is evident that the work given by the government should have certain draw-

backs to it that would force the self-respecting workman back into the industrial struggle. But if he could be sure of a permanent job in his line of work with as good pay as he could get with a private concern, he would want to stay on with the government.

Perhaps the fact of making this government work of the simplest kind and largely uniform for all will be sufficient spur to drive men back into competition. If not, then other means must be devised.

Just what that work should be—building roads, draining swamps, dredging rivers—is a question of detail. It would take much thought and long experimenting and many failures to work out a comprehensive scheme whereby governmental activities would automatically increase in slack seasons and times of industrial depression, and decrease as private business picked up.

Undoubtedly, the municipality, the State

and the national government should each share in the responsibility. But in what proportion? And should one supervise the work, being subsidized by the others, or should each one do its own work? And if one is to do it, should it be the town, State, or Federal government?

These are difficult questions, but they would probably be answered very quickly if the effort were once made to cope with the situation. With present knowledge, however, it would seem that certain large undertakings that can be accomplished only by the national government and which require large quantities of unskilled labor might wisely be done in this way. There are projects that could be planned ahead and carried out just as the labor market fluctuated.

But as this work would be restricted to certain localities and transportation would be expensive, a more localized treatment is



desirable under normal conditions. Each township, therefore, should have some sort of simple work to which men could be put when they could find nothing else to do. This might take the form of opening streets, cleaning vacant lots, or other general and necessary works of municipal improvement. Perhaps the simplest work would be the cutting of firewood or the breaking of stones. The latter, particularly, is especially suited to this variable supply of labor. It requires practically no outlay for tools or materials, it does not suffer from interruption, and each man's work is independent of every other man's. What each man does is easily measured; if he "soldiers" he injures no one but himself.

The question of providing for women is harder. Perhaps plain sewing is the best solution. This requires either a shop and forewoman or the distribution of work in

the homes. And as the remuneration for such work is at starvation rates now, the State would be almost compelled to pay more than the current wages. But if it paid more, how could it induce these women to go back into the competitive field? Undoubtedly stringent minimum wage laws regulating compensation in private industry would be necessary to make this part of the scheme effective.

Whenever men or women apply for work or assistance, one should be able to refer them promptly to such a municipal undertaking with the certain knowledge that they will be adequately taken care of. For such work would undoubtedly take up what may be called the normally unemployed.

During special times of depression these measures should be supplemented by State road-building or other undertakings, and finally by national work. These, however,

should be last resorts, and would be necessary only in times of national crises.

The question of pay is an important one. If the men given work in this way are paid just as much as they would get in private undertakings, will they not stay on with the government? And if they do stay on, will not the same causes that operated in the industrial world to produce this fringe of unemployed produce another reserve supply of labor, so that conditions will not be materially improved?

If such a tendency were observed in any marked degree, then wages should probably be reduced slightly below competitive levels (we assume that minimum wage laws go hand in hand with the specific legislation we are advocating), either by lowering the rate or limiting the employment given to part time. This latter would be easy in municipal undertakings. It would probably be the bet-

ter plan, as it would allow an opportunity for seeking jobs competitively.

Again, it may be asked, would not the government be competing with private undertakings and making industrial conditions harder? There are two reasons why this would not be so. First, the government would be doing work in a field where it already had a monopoly, as road-building, or where it might very wisely be given one, as in breaking stone.

The second reason is that the removal of such a supply of labor from the industrial world would tend to raise wages. Employers now have power to depress wages because they know that if the laborer refuses work at the wages offered he can probably get nothing else to do, and there will be another who will accept what was offered to the first one. Laborers are competing to get jobs, but employers are not competing to get

laborers. Anything, therefore, that tends to increase the demand for labor and reduce the supply, as the creation of work by the government, would raise wages in the competitive sphere.

Hence in three ways this policy of making work would help the laboring classes: it would relieve them of much of the burden of supporting the unemployed; it would increase the security of their employment; and it would tend to raise their wages.

What has been done along these lines by municipalities will be found in the survey of the American Association for Labor Legislation. (*Am. Lab. Leg. Rev.*, Nov., 1915.) It is an encouraging beginning, but it is only a beginning. Much remains to be done. Courage and faith are necessary to face the inevitable difficulties and criticism and discouragements.

## CHAPTER V

### THE STATE'S DUTY TO THE UNEMPLOYABLE— THE INCAPABLE

THE question of securing employment for men who are able and willing to work, however, is only one phase of the problem. There is also a vast army of men who are unemployable under such simple conditions as we have so far assumed. It will do no good to find them jobs in the industrial world because they cannot keep them. They are defective in some way that makes their employment unprofitable.

A few years ago a young fellow came to me seeking help. He had been living in a big Eastern city, but had pulled out to get away from evil companions. For some

years he had been drinking heavily, yet he was willing to break with home and friends in an effort to do better. It was a great sacrifice for him and shows that he was really earnest in trying to reform.

An important railroad in the city where I then was happened to be conducting a sort of philanthropic scrap-yard to help absorb the surplus labor, so he got a job there. To relieve him of his temptations as far as possible, I made arrangements to draw his pay and to meet all his expenses so that he should not have the handling of money. He went to work on Friday. Monday night he came to me drunk. To get liquor, he had played a piano and sung in a saloon. Naturally he lost that job—the one in the scrap-yard.

For a week or so he half starved. Then I managed to get him employment in a lunch room. He worked six days. At the end of that time the proprietor asked him to black

his shoes for him. "I'll black your eyes first," was the answer.

The next place he found work was in a hospital. In about two months he went on five or moresprees. Though the Sisters were most kind to him, they were finally obliged to discharge him. Whereupon he sold his clothes and everything else he had that was marketable to buy liquor, and celebrated with a "glorious" debauch.

It is useless to get such a man a job. An employment bureau or a charitable agency that sends such men to its clients will simply hurt a deserving man's chances of getting a position on their recommendation. And while this is only one case, it is typical of a very large number of those out of work. We do not know what percentage of the unemployed belong with these unemployables, but it is probably fifty per cent. Certainly any one who has had experience in charitable



work can tell of hundreds of cases duplicating this one in all essentials.

These men are not necessarily physically unfit. Many of them are perfectly strong in body. Their muscles are able to stand hard work. But there is a defect somewhere that renders them *unemployable*.

This unfitness manifests itself in many ways. One is an uncontrollable desire for liquor. They will not, perhaps cannot, keep away from it. Sometimes they will go for weeks or months without touching a drop, and then at a crucial moment when they should be steadier than ever, because their responsibilities are greater, they take a glass or two to brace them up, and of course instead of being braced up they and their resolves collapse. Industries can't be run with such people, and soon they find themselves out of work. Out of two thousand men given medical attention at the New York Munici-

pal Lodging House, 39 per cent. were found to be suffering from alcoholism. (*American Labor Legislation Review*, November, 1915, p. 608.)

Or it may be a certain quarrelsome nature or suspicious disposition that makes it impossible for others to get along with them. They are continually taking offense, or scenting injustice, or complaining of favoritism. At any rate, they are not the sort of people you want about your store or factory. They drive away customers and demoralize their fellow employees. If "it's the voice with a smile" that wins out in a telephone exchange, it's the man with a grouch that loses there and elsewhere.

Again, it may be a disposition to "soldier." Through long years of drifting they have acquired ineradicable habits of laziness. To make them work would require a special foreman to stand over them every minute.

Or they are always late in getting to work in the morning. Lacking in ambition, they cannot be reached. A threat of discharge has no force. The only thing to do is to "fire" them before they demoralize the other employees.

Others have caught the *wanderlust*. They pass from one job to another, from one city to another, even from one continent to another. After a month or so, they leave—not to go to a better job, but simply because a few weeks in one place is all they can stand. There is a great deal of wisdom in the old saying, "A rolling stone gathers no moss." And it is not controverted by the query, "But who wants to gather moss?" If a man is to be an efficient social being, he must gather moss in the sense of storing up good, steady habits, accumulating capital and being able to support himself decently. Those who don't are undesirable citizens, chron-

ically out of work because they are unemployable.

Most of these men profess to be willing to work and actually will work for a short time. But quite a number of others are professional loafers. They will not even start at a job. They are determined parasites who live by begging from soft-hearted people.

In addition to these moral defectives—for temperance, industry, and stability are moral qualities—there are some who are physically unfit. Probably about ten per cent. of the idle can do no work, and about ten per cent. more are capable only of light work. (Cf. *Am. Lab. Leg. Rev.*, Nov., 1915, p. 606.) Of these, some are mentally handicapped, either by congenital or acquired defects, some are sickly and some are deformed.

The causes operating to produce these defects in unemployables are partly individual

and partly social. Some of them can be eliminated and some cannot, but every effort should be made to reduce them as far as possible.

The saloons, of course, are among the most fertile causes of unemployableness. But they are as frequently, perhaps, a symptom as a cause. If the taste were not developed by vicious companions, overwork, worry, perhaps heredity, they would not flourish to the same extent.

These and all other morally defective unemployables can be guarded against or helped by all institutions that make for character-building. Schools, churches, and all other moral agencies should face the problem and work towards its solution under the encouragement of the government.

Sometimes long seasons of unemployment make a man a chronic loafer. Men quickly lose the habit of work. One who has spent

several seasons wandering from place to place becomes unfit for steady occupation. The supply of such men would be stopped by taking care of unemployment and under-employment as suggested. Industries operating only a part of the year, "blind-alley" trades, casual jobs, lack of industrial education, are all partly responsible, and should be done away with as quickly and as far as possible. Trade schools, vocational guidance, co-ordination of industries—all this would help considerably.

Other unemployables are ground out by our industrial system that overworks and underpays its employees and then scraps them for society to care for. This must be remedied by proper hours and wages, good sanitary conditions, and preventive measures against occupational diseases. A development of preventive medicine will go far towards decreasing this class.

But even after everything possible has been done along these lines, we shall still have scores of thousands of unemployables. Man is endowed with free will and the millennium will not come in our day. With all the safeguards that the State and other agencies can provide, there will still be improper homes turning out worthless children. There will be diseased fathers and mothers transmitting blindness or imbecility or weak nervous systems to the offspring they were unworthy to have. And if we had the most drastic eugenic legislation possible, there would yet be children from good homes perversely choosing the worse way.

Preventive philanthropy is good. It is wise to get down to the roots of the social weeds in order to destroy them altogether, instead of contenting ourselves with cutting off the tops, knowing that for every one we cut another will grow. But in this case we

cannot entirely destroy the roots, and there will always be large numbers of unemployables. What, then, are we to do to take care of them? How are we to keep them from demoralizing the whole industrial system, as at present?

First must come the clear conception that it is a question of *unemployableness*, and not merely one of unemployment. We must recognize that it is useless to find ordinary jobs for these men, because on account of one or other of the defects mentioned, they are round pegs that cannot fit into the square holes of steady competitive industry. Their unemployment is merely a symptom, a result of their unemployableness. To be effective, any remedy must treat them as a class apart. Special conditions must be created in which they can be employed, just as special conditions are created for the blind.

The State should provide special institu-



tions where such persons can be employed up to their full capacity, whatever that may be. It is better for all concerned that they should be so occupied. They will be less of a drag upon the community, they will have less opportunity to demoralize industrial conditions, they will be happier, and some of them will grow out of this class and be able to go back into the competitive fight with self-respect regained. They are being supported now without making any contribution to the funds of society. Why not devise some means whereby they will be made at least partially self-supporting?

There should be State farms and factories to which those who have proved themselves unemployable in ordinary competitive industry may be committed. A great many of those who are now living on charity could be made self-supporting if they had the proper discipline. They are not criminals,

nor are they so defective mentally as to be feeble-minded. But they are lacking in certain essential requirements for competitive industry, and therefore they should be separated into a class by themselves, apart from criminals, apart from imbeciles, apart from the perfectly capable. Their own good and the good of society demands this just as much in their case as in that of the insane or vicious, though there should be no stigma attaching to these institutions as to the ordinary workhouse, their function being educative, not punitive. If necessary, the merely lazy, or surly, or wandering might be separated from the drunkards. They can be cured more easily, perhaps, and once cured should be free to go back into the world to earn their living.

The recommendation of St. Paul, that those who will not work should not eat, should be rigidly enforced. Vagrants and

beggars should disappear from our streets. Those who can work should be made to work in these institutions, and those who are incapable of working should be supported by charity grants.

Such institutions are not entirely experimental. In 1910, New York provided for a Farm Colony for Inebriates, and a year later for a Farm Colony for Tramps and Vagrants. Wonderful progress, too, has been made in the care of one special class of defectives—the feeble-minded.

Besides this, however, for several centuries we have had institutions for women that demonstrate the possibility of such work. Scattered all over this country are homes conducted by the Good Shepherd Sisters for the purpose of bringing back to ways of self-respect delinquent girls and women. There is a widespread conviction that it is impossible to reform these women. It is hard, but

it is not impossible, as these Sisters have shown.

The visitor to one of these institutions finds an air of peace and quiet and contentment, a genuine spirit of the Good Shepherd, that is in wonderful contrast to the life the former companions of these women are leading a few blocks away—women who cannot hide the misery of their lives though they paint an inch thick and laugh from ear to ear.

What has wrought this change in women who were unemployable except in the world of vice? What has made them self-respecting and largely self-supporting? Partly the example of wonderful sacrifice and devotion exhibited by so many good, pure women consecrating their lives to these former outcasts, and doing it not for a salary, not to be talked about in philanthropic circles, but for the love of Christ; partly it is

the blessing of regular work, each duty begun and ended with the precision of clock-work; partly it is the effect of physical cleanliness, fresh air and good food in quieting nerves and allaying the fever of excitement; but above all, it is the effect of prayer and the Sacraments. Each morning an hour is spent in silent communion with God, and at appointed intervals during the day the soul is brought back to a sense of God's presence. That contact with unseen power gives a strength that no merely ethical consideration can hope to rival.

Why cannot we have some such homes for men who are otherwise unemployable? Why is there not some place where we can send the drunken, demoralized man as we can send these women? Why is there not a brotherhood conducting Good Shepherd homes for men?

There are to-day walking the streets of

our big cities thousands of men who would develop into self-respecting citizens if they only had some such chance. I have had men come to me who knew that they could not of themselves keep away from liquor, and ask to be put in such an institution. Others would have to be committed by legal authority. But whether admitted or committed, in the majority of cases they would not fail to profit. Give them a religious atmosphere, certain religious exercises, steady employment, and they will brace up wonderfully. If fallen women can be reclaimed, so can fallen men; and the percentage saved would probably be higher among men than women.

Religion and regularity would be their salvation, as it has been the salvation of so many women. Alone they can attain to neither; in an institution with the moral force of custom and numbers they could get both. It is a great deal easier for a man with a

flabby will to rise at five o'clock when two hundred others do it with him, than when he is by himself; it is easy for a man to go to Mass every morning when the chapel is in the same building and all attend. Yet all these practices will have a tremendous influence in bringing about a change from old, demoralizing habits. Put the worst drunkard in the world in an institution where saintly men are serving him for God's sake, and where he sees hundreds, who were once as bad as he was, now leading simple, abstemious, prayerful, regular lives, and he will inevitably be affected for good; if he be not the worst drunkard, but only lazy, he will respond wonderfully, provided he have half a will to reform.

But the physical side would not be neglected. Early rising, personal cleanliness, wholesome food at regular intervals, would contribute their share towards rehabilitating

these derelicts. By constant repetition for months or years these actions would become habitual, just as their former evil customs had become so. Every good action deliberately willed would weaken the hold of the bad habit. And the weakening would be by a force equivalent in its proportion to the number and intensity of the evil actions producing the habit. When the good actions equalled the bad actions in number and intensity, the evil habit would have been destroyed.

There are innumerable institutions where those who can afford it are paying high prices to be cured of drunkenness. This religious institution would be worth them all in dealing with the drink habit and all other moral defects that go to make men unemployable. To feel that they are consecrating themselves to God, that they are atoning for their sins, that they are really drawing close



to the Saviour of the world, would have more effect in reforming their lives than all the drugs in creation.

It is possible that the State might accomplish a great deal without this religious element. But there is no good reason for foregoing it. The State is now subsidizing similar institutions or directly employing sisterhoods to conduct them. Why not, then, utilize this powerful religious motive in dealing with a problem that requires all the forces possible to attain a real success?

We should, then, recognize that of those out of work a large percentage have physical or moral defects that make them unemployable. Therefore work should be provided for them in special governmental institutions, where the very best methods will be employed to make them self-respecting and self-supporting.

## CHAPTER VI

### THE DUTY OF THE INDIVIDUAL

EVERY man, then, has a right to the opportunity to work. And the correlative duty of furnishing this opportunity, under a wage régime, falls upon the State. This implies employment bureaus, correlation of industries and compulsory insurance for those who are temporarily out of work. Those who are permanently unemployed, whether competent or incompetent, should be furnished work by the State according to their capacities.

But while the individual has no direct duty to furnish work for the unemployed, is he therefore entirely absolved from all obligation? There is a tendency, I know, to

imagine that the individual has no responsibility for what the State does. To hang an obligation on this anonymous hook is to get rid of it altogether. However, is such an attitude justified?

Perhaps in a rigid autocracy, the individual citizen may salve his conscience by throwing all the odium upon the government. But in a republic matters are different. No such Pilate-washing of the hands will absolve the voters. For the State will act as the voters dictate, and each one can say, "I am the State." He is not the whole State, but he is a part of it, and to that extent he becomes responsible for the State's action.

Of course, each citizen is not the equal of every other. While no one has more than one direct vote, some have more influence and power than others. In proportion to his power he will be judged. In private con-

versation, with tongue or pen, or in any other way possible to him, he must endeavor to bring about the fulfilment of this duty to the unemployed. A perpetual passing on of the duty will get nowhere. Each man is his brother's keeper, and the duty of the keeping cannot be shifted to the world at large.

Unemployment is sapping the strength and undermining the efficiency of several millions of our fellow citizens. Mere individual efforts at finding employment or dispensing charity are futile or worse. Even State activity in the form of insurance and employment bureaus will never really get down to the root of the matter. There must be national provision of the opportunity to work. And in this action of the nation we must share. Each in his own measure must help on the formation of the public opinion necessary for such action, so that some day

there will be no men standing here all the day idle because no man hath hired them.

We have heard much about the development of water power and mineral deposits. Capital and engineering skill have been lavished upon projects to harness the forces of nature and to utilize her resources to the utmost. Men have burrowed into the bowels of the earth, and now more or less like eagles they are invading the empyrean.

So eagerly and feverishly did men attack this conquest of nature that a halt had to be called. Talk of development gave way to some extent to talk of conservation. A distinction was recognized between waste and use. Not a moment too soon far-seeing statesmen forced a consideration of posterity.

When are we going to understand that the noblest and most important task for any nation is the development and the conserva-

tion of its human energy? Great inventions of engines and automobiles, the digging of canals, the harnessing of waterfalls, the careful utilization of all formerly waste products, of every particle of matter down to the hairs in pigs' ears, are a condemnation of a nation that allows its flesh-and-blood engines, its human dynamos, its living powers, to stand idly rusting out an existence unworthy of men.

We need a movement that will utilize all the muscles and brains we have, that will develop our manhood to its full capacity, that will make it a crime to have men standing all the day idle because society cannot put their hands to work. In the vineyard of the future there will be work for all—wholesome, dignified, soul-building work.







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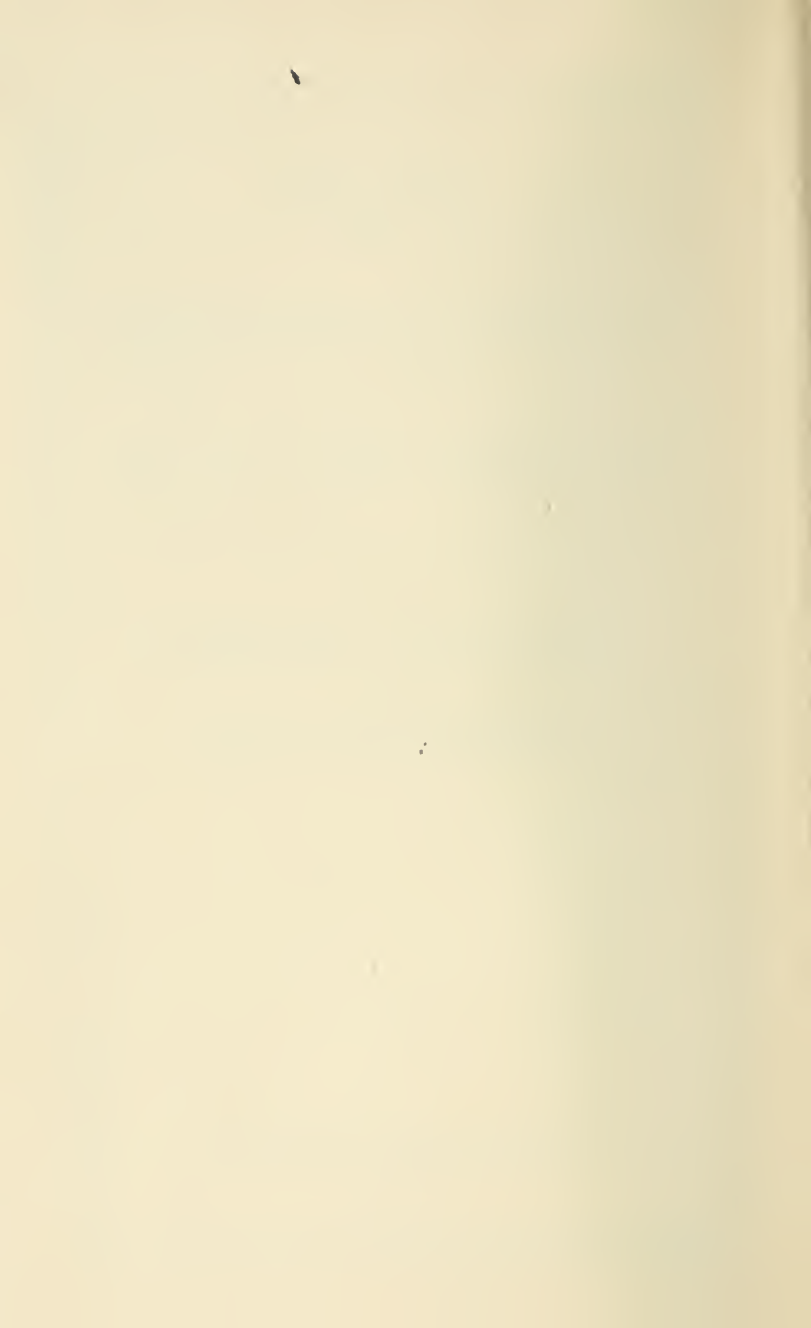
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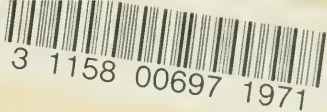
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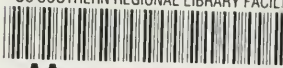
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